



## **Minutes**

October 23, 2017  
10 a.m.

Scarritt Bennett  
1008 19th Avenue South  
Nashville, TN 37212

### **Council Members in Attendance**

Shannon Taylor, Chair  
Joey Ellis, Vice Chair  
David Craig  
Cleatrice C. McTorry  
Dawn Fry  
Amy Allen  
Patricia Valladares  
Paula Brownyard  
Darlene Walden  
Catherine Knowles  
Brian Brown  
Chantel Hess-Taylor  
Mary Meador  
Angela Jackson  
Susan Feltner  
Jennifer Escue

### **Council Members Not in Attendance**

Margaret Spickard  
Shannon Streett  
Travis Commons

### **Department Employees in Attendance**

Theresa Nicholls, Assistant Commissioner  
Bill Wilson, Office of General Counsel  
Evans Murray  
Joanna Bivins  
Kristen McKeever  
Allison Davey  
Blake Shearer  
Rachel Wilkinson  
Alison Gauld  
Michael Holman  
Nancy Williams  
Gary Smith  
Anika Chambers  
Lori Morris  
Erin Lavery  
Kate Martin

### **Visitors in Attendance**

Karen Pearson  
Sherry Wilds  
Cathy Brooks

## **Objective**

Provide policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in Tennessee.

## **Welcome/Introductions**

**Shannon Taylor**

## **Approval of Current Agenda and Minutes (AC Goal 7)**

See AC website ([here](#)) for agenda

- **Action Item**

Shannon Taylor, chair, made a motion to approve the October 23, 2017 agenda. The motion was seconded by council member, David Craig.

- **Final Action Taken**

The Council voted unanimously in favor of approving the October 23, 2017 agenda.

## **Approval of July 10, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

See AC website ([here](#)) for April minutes

- **Action Item**

A motion was made to approve the July 10, 2017 minutes. The motion was seconded.

- **Final Action Taken**

The Council voted unanimously in favor of approving the July 10, 2017 minutes.

## **Public Comments (as applicable)**

**Shannon Taylor**

- No comments were made.

## **Advisory Council Member Introductions**

**Theresa Nicholls**

- Joey Ellis – New member to the council, youth educator and mentor, works with STEP and is a post-secondary transition specialist.
- Patricia Valladares – STEP Director for middle Tennessee region, liaison for multi-cultural STEP members, council member for three years.

## **Election of the Chair and Vice Chair**

**Theresa Nicholls**

- Shannon Taylor and Joey Ellis were nominated as chair. The motion to nominate Shannon was seconded and she was elected as chair.
- Joey Ellis was nominated for vice chair. The motion was seconded and Joey was elected as vice chair.

## **Advisory Council Member Spotlight**

**Shannon Taylor, Chair**

- Dawn Fry from Cookeville was chosen as the Advisory Council Member Spotlight. She is an attorney, a professor, and a parent of a child with a disability.

## **SEA Updates**

**Theresa Nicholls**

- Growth of regional support is indicative of the department's efforts to increase access to knowledge and assistance to schools and individuals throughout the state.
- Updates have been made to rubrics regarding assessments for students with IEPs.
- Discussed goals of the Tennessee Succeeds program.

- For the first time since implementation three years ago, Tennessee has met requirements for the results driven accountability framework for its IDEA state determination.
- Students are being included in the General Education setting significantly more than they were four years ago.
- Discussed the lowered rates of SLD identification since RTI implementation.
- Disproportionality of SLD identification between BHN and non-BHN students has essentially disappeared.
- There is a lower rate of SWDs participating in CTE courses than their General Education peers.
- The disproportionality between SWDs and Non-SWDs regarding the Foreign Language Waiver will be further explored.
- **Question: Could the discrepancy between SWD and Non-SWD students enrolled in CTE courses be due to the fact that attendance is structured differently between those students?**
  - **Answer: It could be a contributing factor, but it is unlikely that it is solely responsible for the gap. More research is needed.**
  - **Comment: An SWD was un-enrolled from a CTE course because they did not have insurance.**
- **It was decided that the discussion of SWD enrollment in CTE courses would be discussed in greater depth at another meeting of the council.**
- **Question: Is there a correlation between states that have higher scores for SWDs and the amount of inclusivity those students have with the general education students?**
  - **Answer: While there is not yet a definitive answer, the bulk of the literature on the subject suggests that a more inclusive environment is very beneficial to the students.**
  - **Comment: The teachers and principals need to be further educated about inclusion.**
- **Question: Is it true that voluntary pre-K programs cannot have special education students in them?**
  - **Answer: That is not true.**
- **Question: Does the council need to adjust any of its goals?**
  - **Answer: The goals need to be discussed at or before the next meeting.**

## **Review of 2015-2016 Annual Report**

**Theresa Nicholls**

- Discussion of the current goals and how they were visited during the 2015-2016 period.
  - Goal 1 – The promotion of inclusivity for SWDs in the division's beliefs, a variety of grant opportunities, mental health services, the state systemic improvement plan, the interpreter task force, and the accompanying data.
  - Goal 2 – Regarding the transition into independent living. At this time, the council was provided information about the Occupational Diploma that was being proposed. Information was shared about transition planning.
  - Goal 3 – Information was shared about state activities regarding ongoing assessments and accommodations during the 2015-2016 period.

- Goal 4 – Focus on professional learning opportunities, specifically trainings provided by the state regarding RTI, trainings for school psychologists, and training for sign language interpreters.
- Goal 5 – Sufficient funding for special education services, such as the IEA program, multiple task forces, and discretionary grants.
- Goal 6 – The usage of state and local data, such as isolation and restraint data, districts in need of intervention, and updates on the consolidated planning and monitoring process.
- Goal 7 – Enhanced communication among the education community, including the sharing of data, transparency of meetings, and transparency of dispute and resolution options.
- Goal 8 – Implementation of RTI and the trainings associated.
- **Suggestion: It would be a good idea to revisit the goals during the upcoming work-session**

### **Alternate Academic Diploma**

**Alison Gauld**

- Comes out of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- Feedback and critiques are welcome and encouraged
- An emphasis will be placed upon educating the students about their rights
- **Question: Regarding the interpretation of 'terminal' for graduating students and the services that are available to them after graduation, could that be further elaborated on?**
  - **Answer: Through this 'Alternate Academic Diploma' the students in question could still be eligible for state services that they previously would not be eligible for after graduation.**
- **Question: How will employers view the Alternate Academic Diploma compared to the Standard High School Diploma?**
  - **Answer: It has been found, in the case of the Occupational Diploma, that once the employers are familiar with the individual and what their diploma actually means, that they are receptive to them and more likely to re-interpret their diploma requirements for the position if the job seeker is fit for the position.**
- **Question: What will be the point of action for getting the word out about the Alternate Academic Diploma to the districts?**
  - **Answer: Trainings will be made available for scheduling, instruction, and curriculums.**
- **Comment: High school principals need to be included in this implementation.**

### **Federal Reporting Updates**

**Rachel Wilkinson**

- Tennessee was determined **meets requirements** under the RDA (Results Driven Accountability) determination process used by the federal government.
- There is a plan to make a guidance document and a calculator so that districts can input their own data and keep track of their significant disproportionality.
- **Question: Are there plans to implement additional systems?**
  - **Answer: Districts that had strong material resources and support were identified on all levels of leadership and there is a plan in place to expand over the next several years to encompass more districts.**

**Update on Gifted Consortium****Nancy Williams**

- Numerous districts across the state have applied to be included in the gifted consortium.
- Administrators and teachers involved with the consortium participate in trainings.
- Training is focused on identifying gifted students, curriculum, grouping, instructional strategies, MTSS, and differentiation.
- **Comment: The teachers that the council has spoken to have said that the training is good.**

**New Business****Shannon Taylor**

- PIE Conference Dates: February 5–8. Topic to be discussed is Reducing Chronic Absenteeism through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports.

**Call for Future Meeting Topics****Shannon Taylor**

- It was requested that anyone who might be interested in being the member spotlight during the next meeting would contact Shannon.

**Closing Remarks/Adjourn****Shannon Taylor**

- The date of January 22 was decided upon for the next meeting of the council. It was also decided that the council would have a working session on the Sunday preceding the meeting.